

ANCIENT BURYING GROUND THE SPORT OF VANDALS

Once Hallowed Resting Place of Departed Georgetown Pioneers Now a Playground For Noisy Urchins—Tombstones Defaced and Sacred Mounds Made the Dumping Place For the Neighborhood Debris.

VANDALISM and the tooth of time have wrought ruin in the old Presbyterian burying ground in Georgetown. This ancient cemetery now presents a sad spectacle. Where once graveled walks led past green mounds and gave order and harmony to the place of burial, the path of the careless wayfarer now goes over grave and tablet in the shortest cut across the lot. Where once the mourner trod with sorrow to the new-made grave a denizen of the neighborhood passes at nightfall, whistling ragtime, for his bucket of beer at the nearby saloon.

Noisy urchins have made a playground of the cemetery. They run and shout above the dead. With the destructiveness of boyhood, they have broken down tombstones and defaced many inscriptions. Some of them, apparently with the artistic instincts of the savage, have scrawled rude skulls and cross-bones upon the monuments, and have lettered in black paint filthy legends that seem humorous to vicious minds.

Dumping Ground for Debris.

The old graveyard is the dumping ground of old shoes, tin cans, and debris from the neighboring houses. Despite the watch kept by the police, the designing and the careless will throw rubbish upon the lot by night, so that the place is fast becoming a nuisance as well as an unsightly and abandoned cemetery. Reverence for the dead seemingly has vanished from the youth of the neighborhood, and the old graveyard is the rendezvous at night of those on mischief bent. Loafers gather on Sunday and profane the day and the place with ribald story and jest. The old cemetery is an eyesore to Georgetown and an open disgrace to the Capital of the Nation.

Nature More Kind Than Mankind. Nature has done something to hide the traces of desecration. Violets bloom and honeysuckle grows rank where footpaths have not obliterated vegetation. Weeping willows, maples, locusts, and a lone pine have grown almost to the proportions of a forest. Rows of large orange trees, on three sides of the cemetery, are the remains of a well-kept hedge which once inclosed "God's Acre." Surface water flowing down the footpaths with every rain has dug deep gullies along the slopes, and the place is not unlike a miniature mountain range. But among this wild and disordered vegetation are left the marks of desecration as wanton as it is needless.

Cause for Spirits to Return.

A casual examination of this ruined cemetery helps to dispel the notion that the dead return to earth in spirit form, or that ghosts walk on misty nights near the graves where their bodies lie entombed. If ever disembodied spirits had righteous cause to return to their former haunts and frighten away the intruder it would be found in this old graveyard. The warrior sleeps there, the man of affairs, and the youth cut down in his prime. If the dead knew what is going on, and could strike terror by appearing to them, a troop of ghosts on fiery chargers standing guard in the old Presbyterian burying ground would not be out of place. The living have failed to hallow their dust or preserve the tomb, and if it is ever done it must be by spirit hands.

The Presbyterian burying ground was established before the beginning of the last century, and is one of the oldest



A Gruesome Playground for Neighborhood Boys.

cemeteries in the Potomac valley. It was laid out in connection with the West Street Presbyterian Church. The records of the church and of the cemetery were destroyed by fire many years ago, so that it is not possible to state with exactness when the first burial took place. The land was donated by the owners of the original Beatty & Hawkins addition to Georgetown, and was a part of what was then Frederick county, Maryland, afterward Montgomery county. The cemetery at first included the entire lot now bounded by Thirty-third, Thirty-fourth, Q and R Streets north-west. Not being rapidly filled up, it was thought the ground might be in part utilized for building purposes, and an old row of houses occupied by negro families extends along three-fourths of the south side of the square on Q Street. On the diagonally opposite corner of the square is another short row of houses, and the east side of the square on Thirty-third Street is closely built up, except a lot near the center on which stands a chapel, the property of the Methodist Church South. This was intended as the site of a chapel for the Presbyterian Church, and was sold to the Methodists several years ago. The cemetery, therefore, occupies about one-half of the square, being two plots of ground, each nearly square, located corner to corner and overlapping about sixty feet. It contains about an acre of land.

Early Marks of Decay.

The burying ground was cared for by the West Street Presbyterian Church trustees. A new fence was occasionally erected, and work was done from time to time in the way of keeping down weeds, underbrush and the like. About 1849 much complaint arose over the condition of the cemetery. At that time the fences were down, and the place had fallen into decay. In 1850 the following appeared in a Georgetown paper from a "non-resident":

"Once in a year, for many years past, have I made a pilgrimage to the graveyard, belonging to the congregation of the Presbyterian Church, to drop a silent tear upon the tombs of departed children and friends; but language cannot describe my feelings on visiting the mansions of the dead a few days since. It would have been difficult to believe that the grounds belonged to a Christian community, had I not known they did. The broken fences, open gates, and grazing cattle upon the very grass that

flourished over the bosoms of departed worth; the marks of sacrilegious destruction upon the monumental pile by idle, rude, and vulgar hands, sickened my very soul, and almost determined me not to be buried in a place appropriated to the dead, or even to allow a turf to mark the spot where my remains may rest."

This communication caused a good deal of comment, and led to prompt action for the care of the cemetery. A number of ladies of the Presbyterian congregation called a meeting, elected the late Miss Mary Thomas chairman, and induced the church to give into their charge the care of the burying ground. The fences were then repaired, walks were graveled, lots were soddied, and the grounds cleared and beautified. For thirty years, as long as Miss Thomas lived, the old cemetery was a well-kept

Reverence For the Dead Seemingly Has Vanished From the Youth in the Neighborhood of the Old Presbyterian Cemetery—Plan to Convert the Grounds Into a Public Park.

place. William Kickman was sexton and grave digger in the period, and upon him the keeping of records devolved. The rental for the lots was used first to keep the grounds in order, and the balance for charitable purposes.

Tombs of Pioneer Residents.

Richard P. Jackson, in his chronicles of Georgetown, described some of the tombstones of this period as follows:

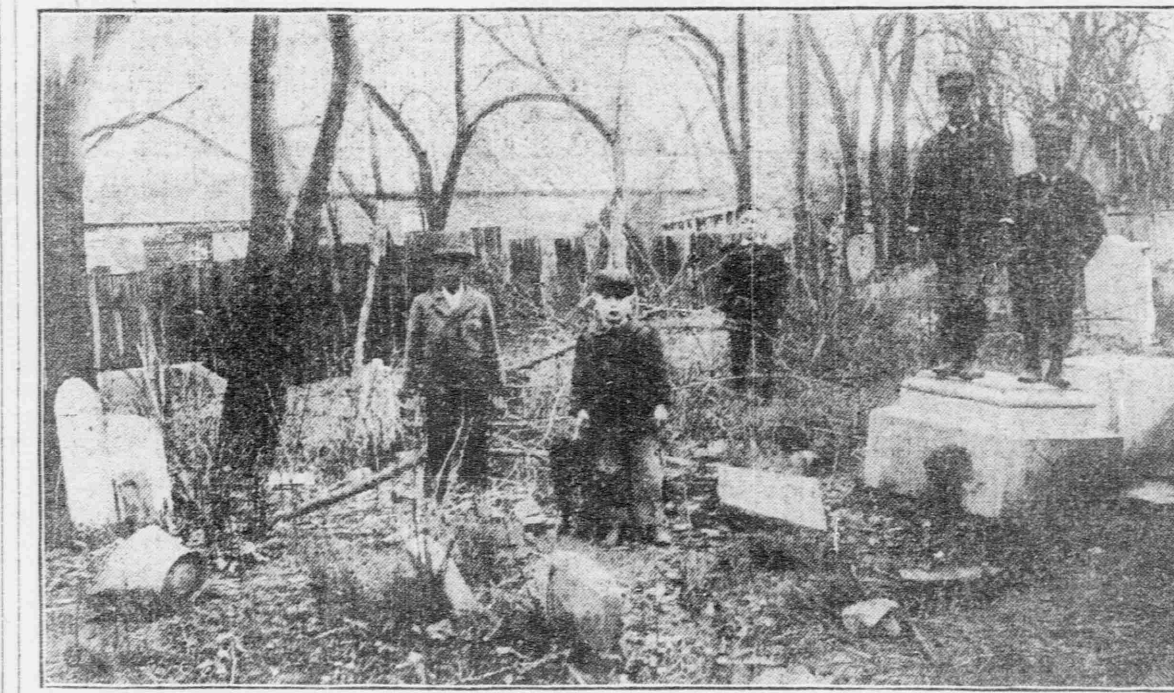
"In looking over the tombstones the chronicler discovers that Robert Peter, the first mayor of Georgetown, died November 15, 1806, aged eighty years. John Barnes, collector of the port of Georgetown for twenty years, and founder of the poorhouse, died February 11, 1825, aged ninety-six years. James Gillespie, member of Congress from North Carolina, died January 11, 1805. Mary Boher, wife of John T. Boher, died August 8, 1844, in the ninety-seventh year of her age. Elizabeth Thompson died March 9, 1847, aged eighty-seven years. William Waters, a soldier of the Revolution, died August 19, 1859, in the ninety-third year of his age. George Beall, born in Georgetown, February 26, 1729, died October 15, 1807, in his seventy-ninth year. The town must have been a village at the time of Colonel Beall's birth."

The tombstones of George Beall, Mary Boher, and William Waters still remain near the east side of the cemetery in a fair state of preservation.

The Last Interment in 1887.

The records of the cemetery now in the hands of Charles Becker show the last burial to have been in March, 1887. About that time a law was passed by Congress forbidding further burials in cemeteries within the limits of Washington and Georgetown. Soon afterward the old sexton died, and as there was no incentive to appoint another there was no one to look after the burying ground.

As years passed the fences fell down piece meal, and were not repaired. After the prohibition of further burials, the surviving friends of the deceased had the bodies disinterred and removed to



Stopped in Their Play to Stare at the Photographer.



The Work of Vandal Hands.

other cemeteries. Nearly 500 bodies thus found new resting places. Possibly 200 remain, but the number and location of the graves no man knows. Many of the stones have disappeared, and others have been leveled and are now impossible of identification. Neglect and vandalism have done their perfect work.

A Pathetic Inscription.

Among the inscriptions still to be read upon the battered and mangled headstone is that of Sarah, wife of John Gardiner, "to whom she was in adversity a faithful helpmate, in prosperity a pleasant companion, in sickness an excellent nurse, to their twelve children a most affectionate mother, and to the distressed benevolent beyond her scanty income." The dates of birth and death are gone, but the tribute to a good

woman remains, one of the best preserved epitaphs of all. Beside it is a broken stone sticking out of the ground still announcing that Caleb Peelle Gardiner lies buried there.

Tomb of a Young Englishman.

On the highest point of ground beside the beaten path through the graveyard from southwest to northeast stands a work of art to perpetuate the memory of John Haydock, a stonecutter, who died April 13, 1807, only twenty-seven years of age. He was a native of Lancashire, England. The slab is sandstone and is beautifully carved with an appropriate inscription. The lettering is exquisite, and none approaching it in excellence is to be seen on any other stone. The top and corners of the slab have been knocked off, but the beauty of the stonecutting remains, and seems to have been its protection through the years, though most exposed of any.

Monuments to the Mackey Family.

Two almost perfectly preserved tombs are shown in one of the illustrations, standing side by side close up to the north line of the cemetery. The tombs are each surmounted by tablets resting upon posts at the corners. They contain the remains of the Mackey family. One of the tablets marks the final sleep of Sarah, who died August 4, 1845, and of Alexander, who departed April 21, 1844. The other tablet is sacred to the memory of Martha, wife of William Mackey, merchant of Georgetown, and the inscription states that near the grave are deposited the bodies of Alexander, Catherine, Christiana and Helen, their children, removed in the morning of life. The broken remnant of a tablet near by once covered the grave of William Mackey, who died November 22, 1859.

A dismantled tomb not far away is partially covered by the tablet of Martha M. Seawell, wife of Capt. W. S. Seawell, who died in Tampa, Fla., November 11, 1839, in the twenty-ninth year of her age.

Died in 1805.

A nicked and broken stone on the south side of the cemetery marks the resting place of David Hepburn, who died November 17, 1805, giving a clue to the great age of the burying ground.

The monument to William Waters referred to was once a pretentious shaft, and one of the imposing ones of the cemetery. It is now dismantled, and

Ruined Graveyard Was Established Before the Beginning of the Last Century, and Is One of the Oldest in the Potomac Valley. Owned by the West Street Presbyterian Church.

its parts are strewn over the ground. That part of the stone bearing the inscription is still perfect, and beneath the name of the old soldier it bears that of Jane Nelson, his wife, who died January 25, 1808, from which it appears the veteran survived his young companion more than half a century.

A tablet scarred by time and broken by the frosts of many winters lies above the grave of Charles Arles McLaughlin, who died March 5, 1866, at the age of thirty-seven years.

A Public Park Suggested.

The question now agitating the minds of the people of Georgetown is what can be done with the antiquated and abandoned cemetery. One suggestion which has found favor in the minds of many is that the entire square be condemned and put to the uses of a public park. The Georgetown Citizens' Association took the matter up at a recent meeting, and a committee was appointed to investigate the matter of the probable cost of the square with a view to laying the subject before Congress in order to secure the proper legislation to carry out the project. There is no public park or other reservation in Georgetown, and the opinion of many is that the old burying ground is well located for a park, and that in transforming it into a public ground, one of the most objectionable features of that part of the District would be removed. The old cemetery is regarded as unsanitary, and its presence in the condition it is depreciates surrounding property, and has for many years stood in the way of any proper improvement of the buildings on the square. For the most part they are wretched tenements, rented out to negroes.

Willing to Sell the Ground.

It has been stated that the congregation of the West Street Presbyterian Church, which owns the ground, is willing to sell it at a low price, provided a guarantee is given that the bones of the dead shall be taken up and reinterred in some other suitable place. It is the impression that if Congress should move in the matter the property could be purchased, the graves removed, the buildings on the square torn down, and a beautiful park established at small cost. The metamorphosis of the place would have a good effect on surrounding property, and Georgetown would have the beginning of a park system. It has been suggested that the treatment of the graveyard might be similar to that of the Holmead burying ground, where the earth was dug over for a depth of six feet, the bones gathered up and reburied. Lieut. James Swindell, of the Seventh Police precinct, believes the park idea to be the best disposition to make of the tract. He has an intimate knowledge of the locality, and is of the opinion that a park in that part of Georgetown would be a blessing for all the years to come.

Otherwise the people of Georgetown believe steps should be taken at once to rid the locality of the old cemetery by its sale to some land syndicate which would be answerable for its improvement. By clearing out the bones of the dead, the lot could be utilized for building purposes, much better than to remain the catch-all for the debris of the neighborhood.

These two plans are all that have been so far proposed, and unless one or the other goes into operation, conditions at the old cemetery must remain going from bad to worse, as has been the case since 1887.

REMINISCENCES OF OLD TIME HIDE HUNTERS OF THE YELLOWSTONE VALLEY

THE Yellowstone River Valley adjoining the region where President Roosevelt and his party are at present sojourning for the purpose of studying animal life, was the scene of the last great buffalo round-up twenty-five years ago. One of the best-known men who followed the occupation of buffalo hunters in the days when the valley was the wintering place of thousands of the "Indian's cattle" was Charley Trask, who has spent the past several years of his life on a cattle ranch near Dickinson, S. D., says the "Amazonda" (Mont.) Standard. "In all probability he was the last of the army of 'hide hunters' to give up the occupation, and it was only when the last large band of buffalo was killed off that he engaged in some other pursuit."

In the winter of 1878 he established his camp on the Yellowstone, a short distance below where the town of Forsyth now stands. At that time there were thousands of buffaloes roaming the grass-covered hills which border on the Yellowstone River Valley, and the killing of these was an easy matter for the experienced hunter. Each hide meant from \$4 to \$5 for the hunter, and the tongue, which was the only part of the carcass generally saved, meant from two to four bits more, after it was smoked and cured. The Yellowstone was not the safest place in the world for a white man in those days, for it was the hunting ground of several warlike tribes of Indians, each of which claimed eastern Montana at that time, and no man knew when he would be assailed by either Sioux or Crow warriors. But the hide hunters cared but little for the danger. Each winter they stood to clean up several thousand dollars as a result

of their winter's work, and there was more than one of these men whose fate has never been learned.

One winter night a crowd of congenial fellows sat around a warm fire in a Dickinson saloon. It was Christmas eve, and the memory of the day brought back more than one interesting reminiscence of early day Christmases. For a long time Trask was a good listener, and finally he was pressed to give his experience on some Christmas Day in the past; to tell of some adventure which befell him in the times when he was a buffalo hunter.

A Christmas Day Round-Up.

"I do not know whether this story will interest you or not," he said, "but the very nearest I ever came to having my scalp lifted was on Christmas Day in 1878, when I was hunting buffalo in the Yellowstone Valley. In company with four skinnners, I had established my winter camp in a thick growth of cottonwoods, which can now be found a few miles below where the town of Forsyth stands, and on the opposite side of the river. I had followed the occupation of a buffalo hunter for several seasons, and it was seldom when I got less than 1,000 hides as the result of the winter's hunt. The winter of '78 passed off unusually well, and I made an extraordinary killing before I had been in camp over a week, knocking down over eighty fine fellows in a single day. I had the best buffalo pony in the entire country and could leave him to his own devices, once in a herd. The method I pursued in killing the animals, I will explain to you tenderfoot, was to get as close as I could to a band as they were grazing, and then dash into them astride of a good pony."

"The guns we used in those days were heavy caliber Sharps rifles, and a bullet let almost any place in the huge car-

CHARLEY TRASK'S STORY OF THE LAST DAYS OF THE BUFFALO SLAUGHTER

cases of the buffaloes as they lumbered of generally meant that the animal was your meat, if you wanted meat, or your hide, if you were a hide hunter. I have been told that one man has been known to kill over 200 in a single day's hunt, but I never got that many except on one occasion, and that is going to be the story of tonight."

"Christmas Day, that year was as bright a day as a man ever saw. There was a little snow on the ground and the air was cold enough to make a man thrash his arms considerably in an effort to keep warm. The day before I had killed five or six buffaloes and had sent three skinnners out with orders to bring the carcasses of a yearling calf into camp, intending to roast a good part of it for our Christmas dinner. The weather was so fine that I concluded to get back into camp about 4 o'clock in the afternoon for dinner."

Stampeded Over a Bluff.

"Down below Forsyth, you remember, the river sweeps close against a high, perpendicular bluff. Leading back from this bluff there is a long grassy ridge and near the river a fringe of scrubby pines follows the edge of the bluff a crescent-shaped fringe being on each side of the ridge. I had frequently noticed the place, and thought what a good place it would be to stampede a herd of buffaloes over and make a phenomenal killing."

"Well, that is how I made the big killing. Near the head of the ridge I

jumped a band of nearly four hundred head of buffaloes and was soon shooting among them, dropping one every now and then. They were headed directly for the bluff and I did not shoot as often as usual, but I had them thoroughly frightened and they thundered on for the bluff, making the ground fairly tremble with their weight. You know, a buffaloe always runs with his head down, and the leaders of the band were fairly in the trap before they saw it. The leaders tried to check the rush and I swerved to the fringe of pines in an effort to prevent going over the cliff, but the weight of beef coming behind was so great that they could not stop, and over they went. As soon as I saw that they were headed right I turned my horse to one side and rushed him to the top of a high butte in order to avoid being trampled by the rush of the survivors, should any succeed in escaping from the crush. It is well I did not, for within a few minutes after I had left the trail fully one hundred maddened animals plunged back along the back trail fairly blind with terror."

Fell One Hundred Feet.

"From my station on the butte top I had an excellent view of the avalanche of buffaloes as it poured over the edge of the bluff. It was nearly one hundred feet to the frozen surface of the Yellowstone and the majority of them were killed as they fell. Some of the last ones that went over apparently es-

caped with little injury, their less fortunate herd mates serving as a cushion to break the fall and, after being stunned for a few minutes, they dragged themselves across the slippery ice and crossed the river to safety."

"Some of the animals were crippled so badly that they could not get up, and after watching with chagrin over fifty head cross the river to safety, I went down to the river to put the wounded animals out of their misery. My pony I left on the river bank grazing, and I was soon busy shooting the crippled brutes. I counted over two hundred carcasses on the ice, and was looking over the bunch with considerable gratification when I heard something spat in the ice immediately in front of me."

Attacked by Indians.

"An instant later I heard the report of a gun, and looking across the river, I saw that I was the target for a dozen Redskins, and they were apparently bound to have my scalp and the immense pile of meat I had killed. The instant I saw them I dodged behind the carcass of a big bull and opened fire in return. I had an old Sharps rifle, which would shoot and kill, nearly a mile, and, with the buffaloes as barricades, I managed to keep my skin intact until darkness came, laying out one or two reds in the meantime. During this time one of the red men, while the others held my attention in the front, crossed the river a mile or more above and stole my horse, which left me afoot."

This I discovered after dark, when I reached the bank and whistled vainly for the pony.

Comrades All Tomahawked.

"By keeping close to the bank I managed to reach camp, but found not a sign of life about the place. The skinnners had not returned, and the camp cook I found tomahawked a short distance from the cold campfire."

"Afterward I found that all three of my skinnners had also been surprised and murdered, and it was only by the greatest scratch in the world and after en-

during almost unheard of privations that I reached old Fort Ellis, footsores, frost-bitten and in rags, a month later. I had nearly 200 prime hides in that camp, which I was compelled to abandon, and the thought of the other 200 hides waiting to be stripped off the carcasses on the river made me sick to think about. The following spring I accompanied a Government party down the river and after a considerable search we found the bodies of my three other skinnners, but I never found a trace of the hides I had salted away in the camp."

A SURE SIGN.

When Spring is comin' in, an' skies turn blue,
An' the first grassblades are a-peepin' thr'u,
I luv' to git out in the open air
An' kind o' loaf about, jest ennywhere;
No wonder 'tis, to me, that poets sing
The changin' beauties of an airy Spring;
Fer somehow when the sap begins to flow
There's unversal joy down here below!
March winds kin' blow, an' turn an' blow ag'in,
Mad ez a hare, an' bitin' like ol' sin;
Dry leaves kin' fly an' kind o' whisker round,
An' rustlin' cornstalks make a shivery sound;
But of you jes' kin hear a bluebird sing,
You know right off it sure enuff is Spring.